Formal Written Traffic: Deciding when to write it down and how: The use of formal written traffic versus verbal point to point tactical traffic.

Formal Written Traffic and Form IC-213

Let's make this very simple and empowering. **Formal written traffic** is not simply taking notes and handing them off. Written traffic must meet certain necessary elements/fields to be useful. Accurate formal written traffic is necessary when those who are not immediately present to hear, receive, and respond to the message. The recipient may be in a meeting, busy in another room, out, asleep, or "elsewhere". Or perhaps the message is to be further relayed to another station or location. In these cases the message must be written down, time/date stamped, the "To" and "From" fields named including titles/positions, and time/date stamped. These are the essential fields of IC-form 213 including the text body. Without the above outline these vital data fields may be forgotten and hence the message may become useless. So let us consider the IC-213 format as the essential outline – the basic template.

In addition to form IC- 213 an ARES/ARRL header may be added to further insure tracking, servicing, error checking, station of origin and location; but most important the precedence (designating whether the message is an Emergency, Priority, Welfare, or Routine message). To clarify that the radio operator does not change anything to the body of the text, the "To" and "From" fields, or the subject time/date fields. Rather the operator adds an additional radio oriented header that further identifies the nature and classification of the message, practical methods of servicing the message, and additioal pertinent data. The ARRL/ARES message template also adds a footer for the radio operators records indicating whom the message was received from, whom it was sent to and the times and dates. We will detail the ARES/ARRL header elsewhere, however in this chapter we will focus on how, why, and when to use the IC-213 as the basis for formal written traffic.

To reiterate, as communicators it is emphasized that we never alter the text body, the TO or FROM fields, SUBJECT field, or TEXT/BODY of a written message that is given to us to communicate. We transmit it exactly as it is written without editing. However using the ARES headers and footers we can and should assign a precedence, word count, etc. according to the following criteria:

ARRL/ARES Message Precedences

EMERGENCY—Any message having life and death urgency to any person or group of persons, that is transmitted by Amateur Radio in the absence of regular commercial facilities. This includes official messages of welfare agencies during emergencies requesting supplies, materials or instructions vital to relief efforts for the stricken populace in emergency areas. On CW and digital modes, this designation will always be spelled out. When in doubt, do not use this designation.

PRIORITY—Abbreviated as P on CW and digital modes. This classification is for important messages having a specific time limit, official messages not covered in the

emergency category, press dispatches and emergency-related traffic not of the utmost urgency.

WELFARE—Abbreviated as W on CW and digital modes. This classification refers to an inquiry about the health and welfare of an individual in the disaster area, or to an advisory from the disaster area that indicates all is well. Welfare traffic is handled only after all Emergency and Priority traffic is cleared. The American Red Cross equivalent to an incoming Welfare message is DWI (Disaster Welfare Inquiry).

ROUTINE— Abbreviated as R on CW and digital modes. Most traffic in normal times will bear this designation. In disaster situations, traffic labeled Routine should be handled last, or not at all when circuits are busy with higher-precedence traffic.

During disaster operations we only handle E and P traffic unless there is time to handle W traffic.

A word count (check) guarantees that there are no missing words due to transmitting errors, receiving errors, or propagation difficulties. A message number, station of origin, and place of origin that is time/date stamped allows for servicing the message while providing important additional data especially if the TO and FROM personnel, their positions, and locations are unknown or ambiguous. The benefits of the ARES/ARRL header on top of form IC-213 is the subject of another paper, also available on HYPERLINK "http://www.karoecho.net" www.karoecho.net

Direct point to Point Comms without the need for written traffic

We need not write everything down in IC-213 forms. In fact, formal written traffic may clog the net and delay emergency communications. In addition, the NCS and base stations should keep an activity log (IC-309) briefly noting the nature of all traffic passed. However, such logs may not be possible in many mobile and portable HT situations.

Direct point to point voice tactical comms can be used for logistics, resources, command, and emergency traffic. As long as the two parties involved can talk directly, there is little need to write anything down, thus slowing down the traffic flow.

For example, Shadow Alpha may be assigned to shadow the corporation yard supervisor. Shadow Bravo may be assigned to shadow the Acting City Manager.
Shadow Alpha = Public Works Supervisor
Shadow Bravo = Acting City Manager

If the Acting City Manager wants to speak to the Corporation Yard Superintendent, Shadow B first calls NCS thus:

"Shadow Bravo with Priority Traffic."
NCS: Shadow Bravo what is your traffic?

"I have Priority traffic for Shadow Alpha"
NCS: "Call your station on frequency"
Shadow Bravo: "Shadow Alpha are you ready for traffic for the Corp Yard Sup?"
Shadow Alpha: "Standby 1" (Shadow Alpha hands the Corp Yard Sup his radio).
Corp Yard Sup says: "Corporation Yard Supervisor here. Go ahead"
Shadow Bravo hands his radio's microphone to the Acting City Manager.

The City manager and the Corporation Yard Sup then directly engage.
For example:
Acting City Manager: We need two AC generators and six barricades ASAP for Manilla and San Pablo Ave"
Public Works: "We are short on barricades. Can send only 3 at this time and 2 generators. Do you have diesel fuel?"
City Manager: We will need the fuel. Can you send, over?
Public Works: "Will send fuel for 2 generators and 3 barricades, over"
City manager: "ETA?"
Public Works: "ETA 20 minutes"
City Manager: Send additional barricades when available, over"
Public Works: "Will do"
Bravo Shadow: "Bravo Shadow Clear, W6ABC"
Alpha Shadow: Alpha Shadow Clear, W6ABD

When finished Shadow Bravo voices: "Brava Shadow Clear"
Shadow Alpha then voices: "Alpha Shadow Clear"

Example: KK6NDH is the shadow for CERT Area IC KEN1
KEN1: KEN1 Emergency
NCS: KEN1 GO
KEN1: I have Emergency traffic for the EOC
NCS: KEN1 Call the EOC here and pass your traffic
KEN1: EOC I have Emergency traffic for the Incident Commander
EOC: "This is the EOC IC go"
KEN1: "Massive mudslide heading down from Cambridge and Beloit toward Arlington. Many houses off their foundation."
EOC: "Is the Arlington open for traffic at this time?"
KEN1: "Affirm"
EOC: "No immediate aid teams available here at this time. Evacuate residents in the path."
KEN1: "Will do, KEN1 KK6NDH, Clear"
EOC: "Clear, KB6OBK, Back to Net."

Red Cross manager at El Cerrito HS needs to talk with Salvation Army Soup Kitchen Chef regarding the delivery of 45 breakfasts. For this exercise all traffic must be directed by net control and handled on frequency.

The El Cerrito Public Works director needs to talk to the Acting City Manager regarding needed tools and supplies. Both have ham shadows assigned to them.

Public Works: "Can you requisition 5 hydraulic jack hammers with air compressors and 25 respirators from the ICP cache?"

Acting City Manager: "We will make the request ASAP. Do you have any specifications?"

Public Works: "Negative, any will do.over"

Acting City Manager: "Will do, Shadow Bravo, K6RJM clear"

Public Works: Shadow Alpha, KK6SRD, back to net"

Ken3 IC needs to know if Ken2 can spare 10 trained SAR workers for Ken3. Both have ham shadows.

KEN3: "Ken2 can you spare 10 trained SAR workers?"

KEN2: "Affirm, they are standing by"

KEN3: "Please send ASAP. What is their ETA?"

KEN2: "ETA 20 minutes, over"

KEN3: "Copy, KEN3, K6KOP clear"

KEN2: "KK6GIO, KEN2, back to net."

EC9 requests 10 extra fully charged FRS radios from EC7.

EC9: "Can you provide"

EC7: "We have 5 that we can provide at this time"

EC9: "Acceptable: What is your ETA?"
 etc.

KEN6 has Emergency traffic for the EOC

Ken6: "We have 6 houses on fire and spreading toward the gas-main leak on Colusa and Briar Patch. Please advise." Etc.

Similarly, Fireman Smith may need to talk to Fire Chief Lewis, Red Cross Shelter Manager may need to talk to the SATERN soup kitchen chef, CERT EC5 IC needs some hammers and wants to talk to cache supply at CERT EC3, ICP Ken5 needs to talk to the IC at the EOC, temporary Evacuation Center Police Officer may want to request a shelter manager from Red Cross HQ, etc. Voice point to point direct tactical communications are entirely more efficient than written message traffic handling and should be encouraged. Just imagine how great the delay would have been in the above situations were form 213s were used. Voice point to point tactical comms are preferred as they are efficient and are capable of instant coordinated replies. They lack only in fulfilling documentation and administrative needs that arise only AFTER the immediate disaster dangers have passed.

The Use of Form ICS-309 Log

Form ICS-309 should be differentiated from the NCS's Operational Log. The latter needs to

record who is on the net, what frequency they have been sent to pass traffic, the destination of their traffic, their tactical callsigns, and location. On the other hand, form ICS-309 is a brief one line notation indicating the parties involved, the time/date, and very brief notation of the subject matter of the exchange. It is not designed to substitute for a form ICS-213 (the latter to be used when the designee (recipient) of the message is otherwise unavailable).

If on a repeater net, one scribe can handle form 309 for the entire net as long as all the traffic is handled on net frequency. Every net can have a designated scribe. However on a simplex net, rarely can one scribe hear all stations and keep a complete form-309. That is unavoidable, as it is never permissible to slow down the traffic of any emergency net in order to fill in the ICS-309 paperwork. In short, ICS-309 is recommended for debriefing (paperwork), but not necessary for emergency point to point tactical or formal written traffic.

It is also not practical for shadows to fill out form ICS-309s especially in fast acting situations, which keeps the shadow on the move.

Summary:
Handle point to point tactical comms directly when at all possible. Handle formal written traffic only as a secondary necessity.
To expedite traffic flow, require that the message center manager or assistant IC consolidate and condense messages when details are unnecessary. Avoid detailed address by address sizeups (damage assessments) while favoring a condensed summary; as unnecessary details can block and close down the entire voice network if written as individual discrete messages. "Generalized" sizeups such as "No damage on Barrett between Tassajara and San Pablo Ave, no injuries or fires", only light damage, or even better, "nothing to report", etc., is adequate during the first 24 hours when other emergency traffic elsewhere is waiting. Similarly, such may be true for moderate damage, like cracked chimneys or a few broken windows, and similar in order to keep the channels open for more urgent emergency traffic.

Use Tight Bundles
When messages have to be written down condense, compact, and summarize them unless detail is necessary or requested. For example, in a severely affected area the first generalized and condensed sizeup could be written as: "Numerous fires spreading on the block corridors bordered by Moeser and Potrero (North and South) and Arlington and Navellier (East and West) - Gas main rupture on Moeser -- Many houses destroyed – many serious injuries including 20 yellow and 7 red tags so far."

In short, there is no need at that point to assign additional human personnel to task an individual door to door address by address survey. Hopefully, the CERT Area IC will make the message as short as possible and not overload the net or assign a message center manager to evaluate and configure each message. The radio operator and the NCS must use their best judgements in facilitating the emergency traffic precedences in the initial stages of a disaster. Only after conditions are stabilized and immediate danger to life and property have been

taken care of, should more detailed damage assessments be undertaken by the net. If the EOC is overwhelmed mutual aid (personnel and equipment) is possible between the numerous CERT Areas via ham radio and/or GMRS.

Mutual Aid between CERT AREAS

Depending upon the day of the week and time every neighborhood has valuable resources that can be shared on a mutual aid basis. We are trained not to rely upon the EOC for all our needs; hence, not all traffic needs to be directed to the EOC.

One CERT area may have many well-equipped general contractors who have many heavy duty tools that could be used in rescue as well as the construction of temporary shelters. Many have trained RNs, trauma trained psychologists, medical doctors, pharmacists, social workers, radio operators, technicians, spare cots, blankets, clothes, first aid kits, batteries, generators, etc. Not every area will be damaged to the same extent, as is common in earthquakes; rather it is often a hit and miss situation. In short, mutual aid between CERT Areas will best serve the community's needs when disaster strikes; since first responders may be overloaded and unable to adequately respond. Therefore various nets on varied frequencies can be established such as a Red Cross Net, a Resource Net, a Tactical Net, a Digital Net, etc., designed to expedite traffic.